

7 front panel of said backpack to provide cushioned back support on opposite  
8 sides of a user's spinal column along at least a thoracic region thereof when  
9 said backpack is carried on the user's back, said bladders each having an  
10 *A1* upper terminus extending upwardly at least as high as right and left upper  
11 attachment points and the gap space being aligned over the user's spinal  
12 column;  
13 pump means for inflating said pair of bladders; and  
14 valve means for deflating said pair of bladders.--

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Please amend Claim 9 as follows:

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1 *Sub B<sup>1</sup>7* --9.(Amended) A backpack system for reinforceably supporting a  
2 user's back, said backpack having a front panel comprising a back-facing  
3 surface supporting a right and a left shoulder strap, extending downwardly  
4 from a right and a left upper attachment point, said backpack system  
5 comprising:  
6 *A2* a backpack having a front panel;  
7 a pair of elongated inflatable bladders spaced generally parallel to each  
8 other and separated by a gap space, said bladders each having an upper  
9 terminus extending upwardly at least as high as said right and left upper  
10 attachment point and the gap space being aligned over the user's spinal  
11 column;